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GOOD NUTRITION SPEEDS CHILDREN ON THE ROAD TO HEALTH

A radio talk by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, broadcast Thursday, May 5, 1938, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 93 associate radio stations.

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

WALLACE KADDERLY:

Here we are in Washington, and back on our regular Thursday schedule again. Which means you'll be hearing first from Ruth Van Deman - your news reporter who keeps you informed of new developments in the Bureau of Home Economics, and research going on there in the interest of homemakers and consumers - Ruth Van Deman.

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

Thank you, Wallace Kadderly. But this happens to be a day when I'm going to comment on day-before-yesterday's news. I haven't any new research to report this time.

As everybody knows, last Sunday, May 1st, was Child Health Day - the tenth time that a President of the United States has proclaimed May Day Child Health Day.

Some of you crowned your May Queens on Saturday, some on Monday. I think it's safe to say there's hardly a community, large or small, that didn't hold some kind of a meeting to discuss child welfare and how to "speed children on the road to health".

As I looked at the candied camera pictures of these 1938 May Queens in the newspapers this week, and saw these youngsters fairly bursting with health and good spirits, I remembered by way of contrast the little May Queen Tennyson described in his poem. You know the verses. They used to be recited on Friday afternoons at school in the not-too-gay nineties. The refrain, you remember: "Wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear, - - -for I'm to be Queen o' the May".

And Tennyson describes the little girl dying a lingering death (probably of tuberculosis) before the next May Day came around. A very sad story. But typically mid-Victorian in the way it accepted as inevitable a beautiful young May Queen's dying young.

Well, since Tennyson wrote that poem nearly a hundred years ago, we've learned a lot of scientific facts about what makes children healthy. Not all we need to know by any means, but enough to shake us out of that old "laissez faire" way of doing.

We crown May Queens now as part of child health pageants, to stir up the community to make it a better place for children to live in. Or to celebrate what's already been done.

(over)

Even on the side of diet and nutrition, I've noticed a change in the last 5 or 6 years. We used to talk about diets to prevent diseases like rickets and scurvy which we know come from lack of certain food elements in the diet.

Then we put more emphasis on foods to assure average health. Now we're trying to raise the average.

When Dr. Hazel Stiebeling was speaking the other day about "Human Conservation and Nutrition," she made a strong plea for a diet that does more than just keep a person in passable health. She urged diets that provide for better-than-average nutrition. The kind of a diet that will help children to have buoyant health and develop to their fullest capacity mentally. The kind of a diet that if kept up into adult years makes the whole life span longer and spreads out the prime of life over more years.

These things have been demonstrated in the laboratory on animals, she said. And there's no reason why we humans can't feed ourselves with as much science and good sense.

And it isn't always a question of how much money we can spend for food. As part of the big Consumer Purchases Study, which I've brought you reports on several times, we've picked thousands of typical self-supporting white families scattered over the country, and analyzed their food budgets. They were spending for food \$130 per person a year. But when we take a close-up of the food values that this \$130-a-year average bought for each member of the family, we find that the diets rate all the way from very good to very poor. That is, measuring them by nutrition standards.

About a third of these families were getting good or very good diets for their money. About half had only a fair diet, dangerously near the border line in needed food values. But they spent just as much as the people who had a good diet. And all too many of these typical American families were getting a poor diet, the kind that leads to "human erosion," as Doctor Stiebeling put it.

And the sad thing is that the families who had a fair or a poor diet day after day could have had a good one for not a penny more if they'd just spent their money differently.

In place of some of the one-sided foods that gave them very little but calories, they could have had more of the many-sided "protective" foods - milk and eggs and fresh fruits and vegetables. And the youngsters would have been much farther along on the road to health than they are today.

Of course I don't mean to imply that food is the only thing that makes children healthy. Well designed clothes are something else that home economics people are working on. That little May Queen of Victoria's day, all done up, in petticoats and pantalets, would probably swoon if she could see the bare legs, and shorts, and play suits that danced around Maypoles this year.

It was only 10 or 12 years ago that our clothing people coined the name sunsuit for the little outfits they designed for children. They started the idea of open-mesh tops to let the ultra-violet rays shine on the skin as young-

sters play in the sandpile. Shortly before that someone had discovered that the sun's direct rays could manufacture vitamin D in the skin, and that vitamin D, acting with the calcium from milk and other foods, builds stronger, straighter bones.

And I don't mean to magnify the place of either food or clothes in child health. I mention these because they're two of the important planks in the research program of the Bureau of Home Economics.

And now on the lighter side. Here, Wallace, don't you want to read this recipe for preserving children?

KADDERLY:

"To preserve children, take one large grassy field, half a dozen children, two or three small dogs, and a pinch of brook and pebbles. Mix the children and dogs well together, stirring constantly. Pour the brook over the pebbles, sprinkle the field with flowers; spread over all a deep blue sky, and bake in the sun. When brown, remove the children, and set them to cool in a bath tub."

VAN DEMAN

I don't know who wrote that recipe for preserving children. I wish I did. If any of you happen to, I wish you'd let me know. And now I'll leave you, Wallace Kadderly, to mention our bulletins on children's food and children's clothing, if you think it's fitting.

KADDERLY:

I think it's most decidedly fitting. These are three of the most popular of the home economics bulletins. No. 1, "Food for Children;" it tells in words and pictures what foods a child needs every day. No. 2, "Good Food Habits for Children" - a very attractive leaflet full of suggestions for training children to eat the right foods and like them. On the cover is this very apt quotation "Now good digestion wait on appetite, and health on both." That's the leaflet "Good Food Habits for Children." No. 3 is "Fabrics and Designs for Children's Clothes" - also illustrated with pictures of small boys and girls wearing the clothes designed by the home economics specialists. All three of these leaflets are free to anyone who has children in the family. Just drop a card to Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, Washington, D. C., and ask for the leaflets on children's food and children's clothing. Never mind if you don't remember the exact titles. Miss Van Deman will know what you mean, if you ask for the leaflets on children's food and children's clothing.

